

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-56. **(Canceled)**

57. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding method comprising:

dividing an input image signal corresponding to an image into image signals
corresponding to individual local regions of the image;

deciding a filter characteristic for each local region of the input image signal on the basis
of image feature data of each local region;

performing adaptive filtering; and

coding the input image signal for each local region;

wherein the filter characteristic decided for each local region is compensated by
comparison between itself and that obtained by averaging filter characteristics of plural local
regions adjacent to a target local region.

58. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding method comprising:

dividing an input image signal corresponding to an image into image signals
corresponding to individual local regions of the image;

deciding a filter characteristic for each local region of the input image signal on the basis
of the frequency distribution of image feature data of each local region over a predetermined
period;

performing adaptive filtering; and

coding the image signal for each local region on the basis of the decided filter characteristic;

wherein the filter characteristic decided for each local region is compensated by comparison between itself and that obtained by averaging filter characteristics of plural local regions adjacent to a target local region.

59. **(Canceled)**

60. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding method as described in claim 57, wherein the image feature data of each local region is at least one of the following data: an ~~the~~ average of an absolute difference in luminance signals between adjacent pixels, an ~~the~~ average of an absolute difference in color-difference signals between adjacent pixels, a ~~the~~ value of an average luminance signal, a ~~the~~ value of an average color-difference signal, a ~~the~~ variance of a luminance signal, a ~~the~~ variance of a color-difference signal, a ~~the~~ value representing an ~~the~~ amount of motion, and representative vector data in color space.

61. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding method as described in claim 57, wherein the filter characteristic is adaptively decided according to the image feature data of each local region and a control signal supplied from ~~the~~ outside.

62. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding method as described in claim 61, wherein the control signal supplied from the outside is at least one of the following values: an ~~the~~ accumulated value of an absolute value of frame or field pixel difference over an N (N: natural number) frame period of the input image signal, an ~~the~~ accumulated value of a quantity of coded data over an M (M: natural number) frame period, and a ~~the~~ ratio of a quantity of coded data in each frame.

63. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding and decoding method for coding ~~the~~ image feature data of each local region ~~as well~~, in an image coding method described in claim 57, further comprising:

recording a coded data sequence; and

at a ~~the~~ time of reproduction, decoding the coded data sequence, and subjecting each local region of the decoded image signal to adaptive filtering on a ~~the~~ basis of the image feature data of the decoded local region.

64. **(Canceled)**

65. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding method as described in claim 58, wherein the image feature data of each local region is at least one of the following data: an ~~the~~ average of an absolute difference in luminance signals between adjacent pixels, an ~~the~~ average of an absolute difference in color-difference signals between adjacent pixels, a ~~the~~ value of an average luminance signal, a ~~the~~ value of an average color-difference signal, a ~~the~~ variance of a luminance

signal, ~~a~~ the variance of ~~a~~ color-difference signal, ~~a~~ the value representing ~~an~~ the amount of motion, and representative vector data in color space.

66. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding method as described in claim 58, wherein the filter characteristic is adaptively decided according to the image feature data of each local region and a control signal supplied from ~~the~~ outside.

67. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding method as described in claim 66, wherein the control signal supplied from the outside is at least one of the following values: ~~an~~ the accumulated value of ~~an~~ absolute value of frame or field pixel difference over an N (N: natural number) frame period of the input image signal, ~~an~~ the accumulated value of ~~a~~ quantity of coded data over an M (M: natural number) frame period, and ~~a~~ the ratio of ~~a~~ quantity of coded data in each frame.

68. **(Currently Amended)** An image coding and decoding method for coding ~~the~~ image feature data of each local region ~~as well~~, in an image coding method described in claim 58, further comprising:

recording a coded data sequence; and

at ~~a~~ the time of reproduction, decoding the coded data sequence, and subjecting each local region of the decoded image signal to adaptive filtering on ~~a~~ the basis of the image feature data of the decoded local region.